

The Last Hope for the Wild

by Zero Dark Thirty

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Summary: The world has changed. The wild is gone. In desperation, Grover calls up an old friend to get his help. Percy and Grover travel the world with an old friend or two, desperately searching for the one thing that can save what remains of the wild. The lost God Pan.

1. Chapter 1

A/N yes yes I know, im crazy for starting another story, especially when I already have one where I have a good amount of support already. Well, I take dual credit courses and I'm in junior year, the busiest of hem all. So updates might slow down a bit. But this idea has been forming in my head throughout the day, and was just begging to be written. To my knowledge this is a completely original story and if this sounds like another story please tell me what it is. For the purposes of this story, I am acting as if the scene with Pan in labyrinth never happened. Percabeth fans, please don't kill me. This will be PerZoe, which is my favorite pairing. Oh, and Zoe is alive.(duh) Now enough talk, on with the show!

Disclaimer: I do not own anything in this story except for the plot.

Grover POV

I stared at the TV glumly. Another rainforest had just fallen victim to loggers. This could be the end of the wild, I thought. Let me explain. Over the last 5 years, the wild has practically vanished. There have been infestations, loggers, pollution, global warming, heck, even a pair of nuclear meltdowns! The rain forests? Gone. There are three left worldwide. Pristine rivers? Niagra falls was one of the last few. And that was only saved because environmentalists literally formed a human barricade. I snorted mentally. Even mortals are doing more than us satyrs. Lake Victoria in Africa has not been

destroyed, but only because of its remoteness. Even the deserts weren't spared. The Gobi was now being used as a giant trash dump. It was a cold, dark world now. At night, you could gaze upon the dirty scars that now adorned the now flat hills. The stars were no longer visible due to pollution. Now, a thick smog surrounds every city. The once wide rolling prairie? A vast apartment complex. 90% of the glaciers have melted. The sea level has risen by 8 feet. Miami, charleston, Los Angeles... Underwater. The ice caps have vanished. Mount Everest has almost no snow left. The Ozone layer is paper thin. Hurricanes are more deadly than ever, what with all the toxins everywhere. Oil was spilled every day upon the once majestic seas. 79% of the species that lived in the oceans are extinct. The few that remained... Seals, dolphins, otters and the like- were endangered, and existed only in zoos. Acid rain is now commen. The once beautiful planet earth was no more. In its place was a unrecognizable toxin dump. There were only a very few places where the wild still held sway. But the number shrunk every day. I made a decision.

"I'm gonna do it." I proclaimed out loud.

The other occupant of the room, Don the faun from CJ, looked up. "Do what?"

I walked over and picked up the phone. "Call a very old friend."

Don understood. "But he retired! He has left the demigod world for good! There is no way he'd help."

I dialed the number from memory. On the third ring, I got an answer.

"Yes"

"Look Percy. I hate to ask this, but I need help."

"He's not gonna help." Don piped up from the couch.

"Yes I know you retired.. Yes, I know you want to be left alone... But I need help. I can't defend the wild on my own anymore."

"He won't help." Don proclaimed.

"Please Percy. If not for the good of the world, do it for our friendship. If you help with this, I will never ask you for something again."

Grover heard a grumble from the other end of the line.

"That's what you said last time..."

"I'm tellen ya, it's hopeless. He wants nothing to do with us."

"Don, please stop." Came my tired response.

He spoke so quietly I almost missed it. "Fine. This once. But you come to me."

Percy hung up and I put down the phone. Don looked at me in disbelief. "He's gonna do it." It was a disbelieving statement. I

nodded.

"Inform the council of cloven elders. Don, you run manegment while I'm gone. Your in charge." He nodded.

Then I grabbed my red rasta cap and looked at it for a moment. Ah the memories. I then jammed it on my head, turned to the door, and was gone.

2. Chapter 2 The prophecy

****Grover POV****

TLHFW POV

Grover POV

As I arrived in front of Percy's dwelling, I stared at it in trepidation. As several people had learned the hard way, you don't go in. He comes out. Slowly the door opens and Percy steps out. He was carrying a large bag over one shoulder and had his head bowed, with his raven black hair and sea green eyes hidden beneath an olive colored beret. He slowly raised his head and looked at me. His once sparkling eyes had dulled. He looked between five and ten years older than he really was. The loss of Annabeth had really hurt him. He had been devastated when she had been offered Godhood after the giant war and had instantly accepted. She hadn't even asked him about it. As Percy had already turned his offer down in exchange for more benefits for the minor gods and demigods for the second time, he was not immortal. She seemed to realize what she done quickly, but by then it was too late. He had been staring at her with a heartbroken expression on his face. He then spun on his heel and walked toward the exit. His walk sped up into a jog, then a run, until he was full out sprinting to get to the exit, ignoring the calls for him to stop coming from people around the room. That had been one of the last times that anyone from the world of the gods had seen him. He tried staying at Camp Half-Blood for a while, but too many memories were involved. Annabeth had tried to approach him multiple times, but he always acted as if she didn't exist. Then one day, he left. He only left a few letters for those in his tight circle of friends. That was the final time the Greek world at large had seen the renowned hero. As he approached, he stayed silent until he was a few feet away. His hoarse, gruff voice surprised me. "Let's go. I want to get this over with."

He fell into step next to me as we walked away. "We are going to go to the Oracle at camp first. That okay?"

He simply said one word. "Fine" But looking at him, I could tell he was not fine. At the mention of his old home, he tensed and his face settled into a cold, emotionless mask. His shoulder retracted and I could tell going to camp would be bad for him.

"On second thought, I'll go into camp. You can wait outside the borders if you want. That way you won't have to see anyone," I offered.

His grip tightened on his bag. "I said its fine." After that I dropped the subject. Nothing good would come of arguing with him. He

was still as stubborn as ever, even in his current condition. As we walked into camp and walked to the entrance of Rachel's cave, we looked out over the camp. It looked beautiful in the midday sunlight. There were students shooting at the archery range. Campers were playing basketball in the middle of the cabins. Pegasus were being wheeled around in the air. The forest was rustling, caused by the stocked monsters. All in all, it looked just like it had when Percy had first arrived. As we turned away and arrived at the entrance to the cave of the oracle, we heard talking coming from inside.

"Thank you Miss Dare" Chiron said as he exited the cave and stared at us. Or more correctly, at Percy. As well as Chiron had tried to hide it, the loss of Percy had hurt him too. The old trainer of heroes felt like a father to every camper, and it hurt his heart to see his favorite trainee in such a state. He rushed forward and swept Percy into a hug. The centaur then held him at arm's length and stared at him. "You came back."

"Not for long." Percy stated coldly. "But it has felt good to see the camp, and you, again, if only for a little while. His face relaxed a bit and little of the old Percy we used to know started to shine through. "How has the camp been?"

"Everything has gone smoothly since you left, though it's not the same without you. But this, here," he gestured with his arm. "This is one of the few clean places left. There is no room for nature in today's mortal society."

That was when Grover decided to interject. "We know. That's actually why we are here. Percy and I came to get a prophecy. We are going to try to find Pan."

Chiron looked startled. "Pan? But nothing had been heard of him since two thousand years ago. The last time anyone actually saw or talked with him is even further back."

Grover nodded grimly. "We know. But it is the only chance for us to save the wild."

Chiron then stepped aside. "Well don't let me stop you. If you wouldn't mind I would like to hear the prophecy before you go."

"No problem," Percy smiled, and some life seemed to flow back into him. "It has been good seeing you Chiron."

"You too. See you in a little while. I have master's archery class to teach now. Good luck!" and with that the old trainer cantered off. Percy smiled at his mentors retreating back. "I forgot how much I missed him." Then he turned to me and gave me a mocking bow. "After you, oh great lord of the wild." We both entered the cave. Then we saw the frizzy haired oracle. "Hi guys! Here for a prophecy?" Percy nodded.

Rachel's eyes shut for a moment, then opened, now a glowing emerald green. Her voice changes, it now sounded like several snakes were hissing out her words. She intoned "I am the oracle of the God Phoebus Apollo, slayer of the mighty python. Approach, seekers, and ask."

I took a deep breath and took the plunge. "How do we find the lost

god of the wild Pan?"

Her mouth opened and bright green mist poured out, forming a thick fog around the three of us. "It never ceases to get less freaky" Percy whispered to me. When the fog had thickened images formed in the mist. It showed Grover climbing a mountain while below him, fending off an army of monsters, was Percy and a girl dressed in silver, fighting back to back. Mist Grover stopped climbing and looked at us. Then he spoke. "To find the last hope of the wild, you will answer seven riddles mild." Then it was Percy's turn. "The cloven one, the lonely one, and the former nymph will travel to find the missing one. Yet in the end, he fades into the morning sun." Finally it was the hunter's turn. Without looking at us, as she fended off a hell hound with hunting knives, she spoke. "Nothing shall be accomplished by the deeds, yet lessons learned can plant the seeds." With that, the mist rushed back into the oracle's mouth and vanished. Rachel's eyes rolled up and she started to topple over before Percy grabbed her. After putting her down on a couch, he turned to me. "Let's go talk to Chiron."

When we arrived at the big house, we found Chiron in his wheel chair form. "So? How did it go?"

I took a breath. "Well, the prophecy goes like thisâ€¦"

After we finished telling him, he leaned back. "It sounds like the pair of you needs to go find the Hunters of Artemis. After that, come back here. I think I know where the first riddle is that you need. It was entrusted to me, a long time agoâ€¦" His eyes misted over as he took a trip down memory lane.

Grover grabbed Percy and hauled him to his feet. "Well. Let's go. And you are coming with me. Oh, and don't expect any help from me when Thalia blows up. You have to handle that on your own." He froze in his tracks, a look of horror on his face. "Uh Oh. Thals is gonna kill me."

I smirked. "Yep. I shudder to think what happens when she seeks revenge for leaving her alone for years like this. And no, I don't carry a lightning proof bunker with me. So sorry to disappoint you."

He gave me a light shove. "Some friend you are" He scoffed with a slight smile. At seeing that look on his face my heart leapt. Maybe, just maybe, Percy could return to his old self after this.

A/N I really wonder how RR came up with so many prophecys. This one really sucked.

3. Cloudy with a chance of lightning

**A/N I have gotten my first flames recently. I guess that means I got my story to enough people to attract negative attention. Don't worry, I have no intention of abandoning my stories. This one will likely end up being my longest story, I hope to hit at least 20k with it. Oh, one more thing. If you flame this story please do so while being polite and understanding that someone put a lot of time and effort into this. Also, please don't say things like, "this is horrible" or "stop this garbage", instead, tell me what is wrong and

how I can do better. I can't ever get better if i don't learn what I am doing wrong. I have almost no experience writing before now, so please bear with me. Omega Alpha Hydra, I will give the answer to your question (and a minirant) at the end. Grab some popcorn and your umbrellas folks. It could get stormy in this chapter.**

Grover POV

According to Chiron, he had sent an Iris message to Artemis and the hunters asking them to come to camp. Artemis had agreed. Apparently the hunters were nearby, trying to stay in what little of nature remained. Percy had gotten me to agree to a plan for when the hunters arrived. He claimed it was a matter of self-preservation. I snickered mentally. Good luck with that Percy. We stood, waiting patiently, at the top of half-blood hill. The sight saddened me. If I looked over camp, I could pretend all was right of the world. But if you looked the other direction... It was a different story. There were factories everywhere, polluting the environment. The land was now dirty and scarred.

A hunting horn blew nearby. Percy hurriedly pulled the hood of his cloak over his head. As the hunters ran up, I bowed. "Good day Lady Artemis. If you could come to the big house with me, we could discuss the quest with Chiron." She nodded and we all turned and headed to the center of camp. As we went, the campers gathered around, pointing at us and whispering. As we entered the big house, Chiron bowed as best he could from his wheelchair. "Lady Artemis. Grover, would you be so kind as to explain why we need the hunters."

She nodded and dismissed all the hunt except the co-lieutenants, Zoe and Thalia. As Grover began, we were constantly interrupted by campers knocking on the door. Asking questions, most tried to fish for information by appearing concerned for the wellbeing of those inside, wishing them good luck. Finally Thalia had enough. At the next knock, she shouted back in response. "Go away! We don't want any more visitors, well-wishers or relations of any kind."

A cloaked figure entered anyway. He raised his head. "And what about very old friends?" Percy asked as he pulled back the hood. Thalia stood for a second, dumbstruck. Then she hurtled forward and tackled her friend to the ground in a hug.

"Percy" Said demigod nodded, ruffling her hair.

"It's good to see you Thals." He **said** as he gave his trademark crooked smile. She miles in response, then sent a fist charged with electricity at his stomach. Everyone heard a loud clang, and then the sound of Thalia cursing. She doubled over, clutching her hand. "Oww. What was that kelp head?" She asked glaring.

"Sorry about that. In the interest of protecting my ribs from taking a brutal pounding, I took the liberty of wearing a breastplate."

"Then why didn't you get shocked?"

"Because I had it specially made. It's lead, one of the least conductive metals. It heavy as hades though. Science 1: Thalia 0."

She glared, and then broke into chuckles. "You sneaky seaweed brain." Then she rushed forward and wrapped him in a hug. "I missed you."

He nodded. "I missed you too. I'm sorry about just leaving you. But I need to get away after... You know."

She drew back and looked at him. "I understand. But don't you ever do that again. Or I will hunt you down. Got it?"

He snapped into a salute. "Yes mam miss feminazi mam!"

The room broke into a collective set of giggles. "Grab a chair Pedro." Dionysus stated. Everyone looked at him in surprise. He had been strangely silent, so much so that everyone had forgotten he was present.

"Now that everyone is here." Chiron began. "We can start in earnest. I believe the line that refers to the quest members is fairly clear. It sounds like the three mentioned are Percy, Zoe, and Grover. I trust there will be no problems?" He addressed this to Zoe.

The huntress in question shook her head. "Grover is a satyr, and Percy and I have been on a quest together before. Lady Artemis and I agree that he is one of, if not the only, tolerable males on the planet."

The old centuar nodded. "Very well. As for the lines about riddles.. Pan gave me something a long time ago. It may have relevance to this." He reached into a bag near him and pulled out a magnificent sculpture. It was a pink dolphin, in the middle of a jump out of the water. It looked to be made of one piece of material. Chiron continued. "The pink dolphin is endangered and lives, or used to live, in the Amazon river in Columbia, South America. It has an inscription on the bottom." He turned it over and read. "Unless ye be of pure heart and in need, thee shall not be able to read this. If I am ever needed, use this and follow the trail, to prove thou are worthy. -Pan"

At this Thalia giggles. "It sounds like Zoe used to, before she learned how to talk properly."

Chiron sighed. "Yes, but let us get back to the matter at hand. You have already seen the Roman and Greek gods. In Columbia, there is a possibility you will run into other gods that we do not know of. Keep that in mind. I got permission for you to be in the air Percy, don't worry. Anything else?" When there was silence around the table, he nodded. "Very well. The quest may leave when ready. And may the gods go with you."

****A/N**** ****Sorry about that. I didn't want to have to keep Zoe speaking in he old English. Surely someone can find the reference in here. It is in a famous movie. Omega Alpha Hydra, I picked my name for two reasons. One, because it sound cool. Beginning of Rant. Two, because to me, the aftermath of 9/11 was the last time America got behind anything worthwhile. I personally think American society is in a bad place right now. What with all these rich people raising a fuss about abortion, and gay people, and black lives matter. I do not believe in abortion. I believe in natural conception until natural death. If you kill a unborn baby, you are committing an act of murder. I am a catholic, and proud of it. I belive those who back the black**

lives matter movement are either ignorant blacks or people who refuse to see the truth. I have nothing against blacks, some of my best friends are blacks, but I find the "cops are targeting black men" ridiculous. Take Micheal brown in ferguson. He attacked and almost killed a police officer. After he had just robbed a store down the street. The cop shot to kill. I support that. If you fight a cop, you get what you deserve. And there was no reason for the days of rioting that cost millions of dollars in damages. If the founding fathers saw America today, they would not recognize it for its values. End of rant.**

4. Chap 4 The flight and a chance encounter

A/N Hi everyone! I'm going to update twice in the same night. I'm kinda disappointed. No one even tried to guess the references. No one! If you guys just aren't interested, tell me. I will stop. Anyway, on with the production!

Percy POV

As the camp faded into the rear view mirror, I let out a mental sigh. It must have reflected in my expression, as Zoe leaned forward. "Perseus, is something wrong?" Her eyes sparkled with concern.

My response formed automatically. "Please don't call me Perseus. My friends call me Percy, only my enemies call me Perseus. I believe you are of the former. While it is better than boy, please don't address me that way." As I spoke, I gazed at Zoe. She was so beautiful. The way her hair glistens, the way her eyes are as black as volcanic rock... I mentally slap myself. Bad Percy! She is a hunter. Thinking a hunter is beautiful means sharp objects in delicate places.

She chuckled. "I think so. We have known each other for what, ten years? Eleven? Besides, you showed me that not all men are evil. You are the rare exception. And don't try to dodge the question. I know an evasion when i see one. I know what happened to you, and I am sorry about it. If I could, I'd give that immortal bitch a slap upside the head. No one hurts my close friends like that and gets away with it."

I mock gasp. "The famous man hating huntress Zoe counts a male as a close friend? What is the world coming to?"

"Shut up." She bumps me with her shoulder. "If you like I can change my mind..."as she trails off, she places her hand on the hilt of her knives. I gulp and shake my head.

She smirks. "That's what i thought. But seriously. You are, at least to me, a close friend. You saved my life multiple times. You saved the gods and Lady Artemis even more. You fought beside me for several years and was always there when I needed help. You have exemplified all the positive virtues of men while exhibiting none of the negative. Outside of a few hunters, you are probably my only friend."

I stared at her, mouth agape, untill Argus pulled up to the airport and let us out. As we boarded our plane, I started to get nervous. As the plane took off, I was gripping the armrests so hard I thought I was going to crush them. Grover noticed and leaned over Zoe to talk

to me.

"Awww, is the mighty savior of Olympus scared of a little flight? Don't worry, you have your girlfriend next to you to take your mind off it." We both glared at him. Zoe took her glare to an entirely new level of scary.

Grover gulped. "On second thought, how about I just be quiet now?" He sat back and instantly pretended to fall asleep, his fake snores carrying to those near us.

Zoe and I looked at each other, blushed and looked away. The rest of the flight was rather awkward.

As we exited the plane, one sensation hit us like a wave. Heat. Lots and lots of heat. Columbia was one of the few places that had any kind of rainforest left. On top of that, the combination of being close to the equator and global warming means it was like a very humid furnace. We grabbed what little luggage we had and gathered for a strategy meeting. Grover was the first to voice his opinion.

"I think we should go find where most of the pink dolphins are left. I could ask any satyrs or dryads we meet to give directions in my job capacity."

Zoe agrees and so do I. We left and depart for the forest. Once there, Grover got directions pretty quickly. We ended up hiring a taxi driver who had a jeep to take us upriver. That may have been a mistake. The jeep in question was very small, and was missing roll bars and had the back left door missing. We were forced into tight, sweaty quarters for three hours. At one point, Zoe started to fall asleep on my shoulder. We hit a rut not soon afterwards, and she slid toward where the missing door should be. I grabbed her, but she stayed asleep, and now had her head on my lap. I tried to push her back up but she grabbed onto me and refuse to let go. I groaned.

"Of all the times for you to act like the daughter of the Titan of strength. Grover! A little help would be greatly appreciated." He turned, and saw the predicament I was in. He started to chuckle, then turned away and continued his conversation with the driver, pretending he couldn't hear my ever more desperate pleas for help. I groaned and closed my eyes. It's really hard to enjoy having a pretty girl on your lap when you know you are going to be beaten up later.

We finally arrived at the tourist center in the city of Leticia, the biggest southern city in Columbia. "Hey Zoe! Time to wake up." I whispered. She suddenly sat bolt upright and looked around, realizing what happened. Her face turned a cute shade of red as she gracefully leaped out of the jeep, looking anywhere but at me. I was happy, yet confused at the same time. Happy because I didn't get beaten up, confused because normally she would gut any male that happens to. I shrugged. There are just some mysteries of life I do not know, and one of those is the reasonings behind the actions of the opposite sex.

The three of us headed into the tourist center and went straight to the main kiosk. There was a woman there, her name tag proclaimed her to be Pachama.

"Hi" I greeted her. "We were looking for information on pink Dolphins." She straightened. "Pink Dolphins you say. I have not had anyone ask about those in a long, long time. The information you seek should be over there." She pointed to a corner as she took off her glasses, folded them and put them in her pocket. I stared at her. There was something off about her. Then it hit me. Her eyes. They held the look of someone with centuries of experience, not the look of a middle aged woman. Her action reminded me of another occasion much like this one, at the Hoover Dam where Athena had done the exact same thing. What had Chiron said? You may run into other gods we do not know of... I added two plus two and got an unpleasant answer.

"Thanks" I said as I grabbed the hands of my two friends and pulled them over to the corner. "Listen guys, I think she's a god in disguise." As I started to explain my reasoning, I heard slow applause from behind me. I turned around. The woman in question was standing behind me.

"Well done, Perseus Jackson. It has been a long time since someone recognized me for what I am. I am Pachamama, Incan goddess of planting, harvests, and earthquakes. I believe you are here for the clue to Pan. I can give it to you, but only after you complete my challenge to prove you are worthy."

5. Chapter 5 The Obstacles

The last hope of the wild. Chapter 5

"A challenge?" Percy raised his eyebrows. "We are trying to save the last of the wild, and you want to give us a challenge?" She nodded. "You have to make it through a deadly obstacle course. I'm a nice person, so you get to steer an automaton with the capabilities of a human through once. After that, you must do it yourself. Not to worry, if you are about to die I will save you. Any questions?"

Zoe spoke up. "How many of us must go through the challenge? And how many obstacles are there?"

"Nine challenges. And two of you must go through. Are you ready? Great!" And with that the goddess snapped her fingers and the gathering was instantly teleported to what looked like a private arcade room, complete with low lighting, plush carpets, and a popcorn machine.

Percy looked at Zoe. "Do you want to steer it or should I?"

"I'll do it." Zoe made her way to the front of the machine and examined the controls. "Looks simple enough."

Pachamama nodded. "All right then my dears. Remember, this is a live feed. See you once your done!" She snapped her fingers and was gone.

Grover pressed the start button and the screen came to life. It looked like we were in the middle of a pair of gigantic sandstone walls, with ancient Mayan and Incan inscriptions. There was enough space for two or three men to walk abreast. Ahead of us there was a wall that rose half way up the two sidewalks, with a slit about two

feet high at the bottom. There were bleachers and chairs sitting in the stands that were atop the left hand wall. Pachamama and a few other people were up there, chatting, pointing at us, and exchanging money.

"They are betting on us?" Zoe growled, indignant. "Let's get started."

Pachamama turned and looked at the screen. "We can hear you you know. Oh, and remember, the automaton will have all the capabilities of a normal human. That includes weakness and pain toleration. Begin!" At the cry, Zoe sent the machine charging forward, before having it crawl into the hole in the wall. Suddenly the machine fell a few feet, and the camera blurred for a second. When it refocused an ominous clicking sound was heard.

"Scorpions!" Grover cried. "Hurry" The camera crawled forward until it was almost out, with light a few feet ahead, sustaining numerous stings in then process. The statue slowed down, the poison taking effect, before it fell fifteen feet. Right into something that was large, slimy, and moving. "Anaconda" I cried. "Zoe, don't let it get crushed!" As the statue tried to make its way out the snake coiled around the machines left leg and began to squeeze. There was an ugly crack as the automaton's ankle broke and it crawled to the light. Once out, it looked around, assessing the area. There seemed to be nothing until a low wall off in the distance. That is, until the three smelled scorched metal. The camera panned toward the ground. Apparently the obstacle course was lined with metal plates that were getting hotter every second. Zoe pushed the control forward and the machine broke into a shambling run. It hurdled the wall and then heard a low growl behind it. The camera turned to see a jaguar stalking towards them, apparently having been released from its cage in the wall. The robot was turned to the front and began to run forward. Then I saw something glisten up ahead. "Zoe, stop!" Too late. The robot ran right into something set at neck level and the feed went black. Apparently the machine had "died".

Half-hearted applause sounded, as the goddess in question flashed in. "Well... Not as well as I'd hoped, but at least you made it halfway. I'll give you two days to train however you wish before you enter the course. Good luck." And with that she waved a hand and the three of us reappeared on a bank of the river, with a little cabin nearby. A brief flash of light shine in the air and Zoe grabbed it. It was a note attached to some plans. The note went like this. "These are the schematics for the maintenance tunnels underneath the course. Can't help you more than that."

Zoe looks at me. "I assume we two will be attempting it?" I nodded.

"No offense G-Man but your not in the best of shape, and you weren't gifted that much athletically in the first place." I turned to face Zoe. "From what I saw, the obstacles so far are scorpions, a snake, hot plates, a jaguar, and some kind of thin razor wire. The jaguar you can get way from if you can get inside the wire maze. I recommend we practice by stringing up thread and having both of us go through it at the same time, act as spotters for each other."

"Okay." Zoe said. "But what about the scorpions and the snake?"

I smiled. "I have a plan for those."

****Line break. (Cue training montage featuring Zoe going through the maze like she's in the matrix, Percy completely failing and clumsy males on the ground with music from Rocky)****

Two days later, we were ready. Well, as ready as we could be. Zoe and I had cut out two pieces of metal each and put them inside our shoes, before thoroughly soaking our foot ware. We had examined the plans and discovered there were some kind of giant wheels in the next obstacle. Zoe and I stood near the beginning, waiting for the signal. Pachamama stood and addressed us. "Heroes! You seek to pass the course and receive the clue to Pan. While I am not the only one that will challenge you, I am one of the hardest. A famous man once said, the hardest part of completing anything is getting started. That is true. Let us see what you are made of!" She waved a flag, signaling the start.

Zoe and I raced forward, until we where outside the scorpions lair. We faced each other and backed up to the wall. We stretched out our arms to grasp the other's shoulders, and we both tucked our heads under the left arm of the other. So braced, we slowly started to walk up the wall. Zoe had halfheartedly protested, but had given in. I could still see the blush on her face, from being in close proximity to a male, even one that was a friend. As we got partway up, our arms started to tremble and we started to worry. A weakening from one of us would mean we would fall, and from this height, that would be disastrous. We finally made it to the top, and took a moment to catch our breath. Pachamama called out annoyed. "That's cheating!"

One of the figures near her shook his head. "Oh come on. You never said they couldn't do that. I like these two. They show ingenuity and originality."

I looked up. "Thanks!" I called. I glanced at Zoe. "Ready?"

She smirked. "I was born ready. Just try to keep up." With that we both jumped off the other side, landed in a crouch and took off running. We vaulted over the cage with the jaguar and approached the wire. I heard a growl from behind us and knew the predator was loose. "Ignore it." Zoe whispered. I grunted an agreement, and slowly entered the dangerous web. After a little while I glanced back, the jaguar had stopped outside first wire and was pacing back and forth, howling in frustration. That distraction was almost my undoing. A shout halted me. "Percy!"

I froze and turned my head. A single glistening ruby red drop of blood hung, quivering on a strand of wore. The edge was so sharp I hadn't noticed it cut me. "Thanks Zoe!" I called, then continued weaving my way out of the danger. Once we were both out, we exchanged a glance and an unspoken conversation passed between us, then we continued. The next chamber was interesting. It was composed of six massive millstones. Three were laid side to side flat on the ground, the others were set up at 90 degrees on top of the others. All were spinning. It was clever really. The first and third wheels rotated counter clockwise while the second wheel went in the opposite direction. To get to the other side we would have to make our way across the three wheels without getting crushed to a pulp. If so much as a heel clipped the upright wheels, it was game over. I looked at her. "I'll go first." I took off, leaping as fast as I could. I

almost wiped out on the transition from the second to the third wheel, but made it across. I pivoted around. "Your turn." Zoe gritted her teeth and started across. It was on the second wheel that disaster struck. Maybe her shoe landed awkwardly, maybe the laces came undone. We will never know. Her ankle buckled and she fell forward. "Help!"

Before the words were out of her mouth I was already moving. The second she lost her balance, I was racing towards her. I scooped her up bridal style, turned around, and carried her the rest of the way. As soon as we got to the other side, I turned in time to see her sneaker get ground to dust between the wheels. It was then I noticed the way I held Zoe. I carefully placed her down, and closed my eyes, waiting for a punch that never came. When I opened my eyes, I saw her staring at the ground, a tinge of red dusting her cheeks. "Thank you Percy."

I stared at her. The blush in her cheeks made her look even more cute than usual. Finally I shook myself out of my daze. "It was nothing. Come on." He turned and led the way to the next room.

****Zoe POV****

I stared at his retreating back, feeling slightly hurt that he treated saving me as such a little matter. But then, that was one of the attractive things about him. That he would save those he cared for without a second thought and think nothing of it. I blushed, thinking back to how he carried me. I must have looked like his girlfriend. The more I thought about, the more I thought I might not necessarily be opposed to it. Wait, where did that thought come from? I am a hunter, sworn off men forever. Shaking it off, I followed him. The next room was seemingly flat, but the floor was a deep amber. There was a slight buzzing coming from around the room. I looked closer, and discovered that the floor was in fact made of honey, and the dots in it were in fact bees and wasps that were stuck. We started to go across, but swimming in honey was hard. It felt like we were in slow motion. The room didn't seem that long, but it felt like we were in there for hours. We both started to move slower and slower as we started to sink as we lost energy. There was no end to this room, it seemed. Now I knew what swimming in jello felt like. As we were both about to collapse, we dragged ourselves out the other side-straight into a room full of feathers that were being blown around by fans. In no time, the two of us looked like chickens. We were now a sorry looking lot. Sore feet, covered in sticky honey and chicken feathers, and we had both lost our shoes and socks in the honey pool. As we slowly crept out the door, we saw the eighth challenge. And froze in horror.

In front of us was a enormous log, covered in massive red ants. They must have been recently released, as even more were crawling to the log from thin cables that stretched to the holes in the wall. The hostess called down to us. "You could always quit. You have held yourselves honorably, there is no shame in admitting defeat. Percy ignored her and looked at me. "We should go now. There will only be more the longer we wait." I backed away starting to hyperventilate. "I can't. I can't do it." He looked at me strangely.

"What happened to the fierce Zoe Nightshade, savior and lieutenant of Artemis? Here follow me, I'll clear a path." And with that he turned and started crawling across the log, going out of his way to clear as

many ants from the log as he could. I could see him grimacing in pain as he continued, with hundreds, maybe even thousands, of the insects built and stung him at once, over and over. The pain must have been like nails, but he opened not his mouth. As I quickly followed, I got stung by a few he missed, and I could barely stop myself from crying out. How could he stand so many? For me? We finally made it to the end, and stumbled off the log and through the next doorway. Straight into a huge lake of water. I could feel the honey, feathers, and ants floating off me into the surrounding water as I looked for Percy. I saw him come, spluttering, to the surface. He saw me and smiled. "Finally! I'm back on my home turf!" That's when he looked behind me and went slack jawed in disbelief.

I turned and saw the largest creature I had ever seen, even bigger than Ladon. "What is that?" I hissed at Percy.

He turned pale. "At a guess, I'd say a megaladon. Those things are supposed to have gone extinct thousands of years ago!"

The voice of Pachamama echoed around us. "Correct son of Poseidon. Though you of all people should know that the sea contains many secrets. Your only advantage is that he is blind. You must either defeat him or force him into his cage, up there." I looked up. The tank must have been twenty to thirty feet up. "How do we get him there?"

A response came back. "Normally I would say use your powers over water, but you will need two individuals with power over water for that. Good luck!"

The ancient creature swam straight at us. We managed to get out of the way and Percy lashed out with riptide. The glowing sword simply bounced off and didn't even leave a scratch. He tried again. Same result. This time, the charge hit Percy and sent him flying into the cave wall as the massive shark came around for the finishing blow. I got scared, mad and frightened at the same time. How dare this monster dare to try to kill Percy! In my blind rage I felt power flow from me and I shot in front of Percy to face the oncoming behemoth. We both concentrated on the water and a massive wave erupted from the water, rivaling even one of Poseidon's creation. The mass of water forced the Megaladon into the air and into his tank. As I collapsed to my knees, completely drained, I dimly noticed I was hovering a few inches above the water. As the world melted around us like an illusion as the sound of applause filled the stands.

"Well done. Well done indeed." Pachmama strode up to us, still clapping. "You have passed, with flying colors. You exhibited several virtues. Tenacity, refusal to give up. Selflessness. Ingenuity. Patience. And determination. You wished for the clue to Pan, and truly, you have earned it." She glanced at the others in the stand, then turned back to us. "And making it even better, no one bet on you finishing, so no one lost any money." She flicked her wrists and the ant bites disappeared. "Really, without the stress and shock of that unusual situation, Zoe may never have unlocked her powers from Pleione lost so long ago. You should thank me. Here you go, as promised." She held out her hand and a small scroll appeared. "I can transport you to the border of wherever you decide to go next, and give you whatever you decide the answer is. Just call me when you are ready. Good luck heroes. May you prove in future to be as valiant as you have here today." And with that, leaving the scroll in the hand

of Percy, she vanished.

****A/N** Whew. Not counting this A/N, this chapter was 2802 words. That beats my old high for any chapter by almost a thousand words. Sorry guys, would have had this up last night, but got hit by what feels like the biggest non-hurricane storm of the past 15 years here in Houston. It is still ongoing. Please pray for the 30-000 plus without Power. See Ya later!**

****Zero****

6. Chapter 6 Monty Python was right

Percy POV

I slowly started to open the scroll with a bit of trepidation. We had already gone from long island to columbia, where might this clue send us? The scroll had four lines written on it. I read them aloud.

"What can run but never walks,

Has a mouth but never talks,

Has a head but never weeps,

Has a bed but never sleeps.

(P.S.) flip this over

I did as the note said. The other side also said to turn it over. I did so. Now, the original side said something different. "Your destination is Egypt. Why don't you take your time and see the sights?" I looked up. "Well, i guess that's where we go next. We should pack some serious sunscreen for this."

Zoe took the scroll from my hand. "All right. Pachamama?" she called, seemingly addressing the empty air. "We need to go to Egypt." There was a brief flash of light and an envelope appeared at our feet. Grover stooped down to pick it up. He looked inside.

"Sweet" He said, holding up three first class plane tickets to Cairo as well as a few hundred dollars in cash. "where's the nearest stand that sells tin cans?"

Zoe and i both laughed at this. "Um, Grover? i don't think anyone sells tin cans. You would have to go rob a recycling plant or something." At this we continued laughing, having this hilarious image of management at a recycling center wondering why someone stole tin cans. Speaking of which... I turned to my fellow quest mates. "Did either of you wonder why Demeter had a daughter named gardner and Hermes has sons named stoll? I just realized that. I mean, what were the odds?"

Zoe shrugged. "Who knows? The fates seem to have fun engineering coincidences like that. Antway, we should get going. I know what the note said, but i would like to finish this quest sometime in my lifetime."

And with that, we left for the airport.

* * *

><p>Once we arrived, we decided to explore a little, seeing as we had several hours before our flight was due to leave. We all agreed to meet at the frozen yogurt in two hours to check up on each other. That would still leave us with about two and a half hours. I went to the souvenir shop. Zoe went to the nature themes shop. I have no idea where Grover went. After a while, Zoe and I got bored and headed back to wait for Grover. We waited. And waited. And waited some more. Finally, Zoe fell asleep and leaned against me. I was extremely uncomfortable with that. Not the part where a pretty girl is on top of me. More like the part where she wakes up and smacks me around. I continued waiting. You know, I never would have guessed that sitting in one place with nothing to do while waiting for someone would be boring. Surprising right? Finally I had enough of this. I woke Zoe up. "Zoe. We need to go look for Grover. He's still not back." She slowly came around, blinking several times and yawning. She looked so cute when she did that. Then she seemed to realize what she had done and flushed bright crimson.<p>

"S...sorry. I didn't mean to..."

"No, no... It was fine, if a little unexpected." I got up and offered a hand. "Come on, we need to find him." And find him we did. But it was crazy. Seriously, I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't seen it myself. We found Grover in a very odd place. He had apparently taken our advice to heart and had, indeed, run off to rob a recycling plant. Or, in his words, "I would have left fair compensation!" Sure Grover. Sure. Keep telling yourself that. Anyway, back to the story. He was in an alcove, about twenty yards from the doors, white faced and trembling, with a sack of tin cans slung over his shoulder. We tried to convince him to leave but he refused. "I can't." He kept whispering. "They'll mug me." Mug him? There was nothing there except for a cage full of bunny rabbits. Maybe they were auditioning to play Bugs Bunny in a movie, I don't know.

"What are you afraid of?" Zoe hissed. "The rabbits?"

Grover was nodding so frantically it looked like his head was about to fall off.

I frowned. "What's wrong with them Grover? They are so cute and innocent."

He gave me a scandalized look. "Cute, maybe, but innocent? Never. They use the cuteness to fool you. They are big bullies. Always beating up and stealing celery from defenseless satyrs."

"Wait, what!"

"It doesn't matter." Zoe growled. We will miss our plane if we don't leave now!" With that she dragged Grover into sight and down the hall. Suddenly, All the rabbits turned to face us at the same time, red eyes glowing. I don't think I have ever seen bunnies looking so malevolent and demonic as those ones were. They all started hopping towards us as fast as they could, teeth bared. We dropped Grover and ran for the exit as fast as we could. Apparently killer bunnies do exist after all.

****A/N** Hiya guys! All right, this is your chance to tell me what story you want next. I know I said only three at a time earlier, but I'm almost done with one of them and I couldn't wait any longer. If I don't get any feedback I will decide myself. The choices are A) Percy is exiled, several gods are afraid that he thinks the gods are the lesser of two evils and make him vanish. 300 years later, the gods are under attack from Kronos, but he won't help. He has his own little camp now, one that sparks a legend around the world. The myth of Shangri-La. The fallout is massive from his decision. Or, the other choice, B) ******Narnia PJO crossover.** When Leo is blown off the Argo by Khione, he lands in a land of everlasting winter. This is the untold story of the hero in the shadows, Leo Valdez, savior of Narnia and the forgotten fifth ruler of Narnia. I came up with this one when I noticed there weren't many(if any) crossovers that were any good or where any length unless other books and movies are involved as well.**

7. Chapter 7 The second mission

Percy POV

The flight was fairly uneventful. Nothing of note happened, with the exception of Grover completely demolishing the Airline's stash of enchiladas and canned sodas, but that's another story. He claimed he needed to regain his lost calories he burned in escaping from the rabbits. We landed in Cairo and were hit by a massive heat wave. It was even worse here than in Columbia, and that was saying something. We got off the tarmac and took a look around. The city and the sights in it were beautiful, though the surrounding countryside was not nearly as pretty. Most of the buildings seemed well enough made, and mostly modern. The Pyramids were just visible in the distance, and the sphinx seemed to be a giant tourist attraction, as there was a massive crowd of people around it. The air above us glittered sky blue, with a few white puffy clouds. We all went into a huddle. Zoe went first. "I think we should go by the sphinx first, and then proceed to the pyramids. It would make sense that whatever we came here for would be at one of those two places. Sound good?" We nodded and set off. It took us longer than we expected. Apparently distances were deceiving in Egypt. We finally reached the sphinx, and then the crowd suddenly receded into the distance, leaving us looking around for the reason for such a mass exodus. There was another guy a few meters away, looking just as confused as we were. I strode up to him and tapped him on the shoulder.

"Any idea what is going on?"

He reached up and removed my hand from his shoulder. "I'll have you know I got this cloak from the queen of America." He turned around, saw me, and pulled me into a man-hug. "Percy? Good to see you again mate. What are you and your girlfriend doing here?" I smiled and pulled back, looking at him with a critical eye. "Carter, you haven't changed a bit! We are here looking for a clue to Pan, the Greek god of nature. Why are you here?"

A new voice decided to interject. "He, and you, are here because I wanted you to be here." A figure jumped off from between the paws of the sphinx and strode towards us. He seemed to be about twentyish, with a head of a hawk that changed into a lion and then a snake, and

back again. "I need someone to retrieve something for me. If you four succeed, Carter, I will give you what you came here for, same goes for you demigods. Oh, and my name is Ash, god of Oasis' and the Nile Delta. Any questions?"

"Where are we going?"

"You will be going to a demigod Camp in France, ruled by the so-called "holy king". He stole my necklace and I want it back. I will transport you nearby, but then you must bring the object here." He snapped his fingers and a map appeared and unrolled itself, showing a picture of France, with a city circled in red. Rheims. "Ready? Great!" He snapped his fingers and the air seemed to bend around us, leaving us outside a massive complex in the French countryside.

"Okay. Now what?" Carter shrugged.

"I imagine we split up and find what we are looking for, steal it back, and then run like hell. Anyone got a better idea?" Nobody volunteered anything, so we split up and found our own ways in.

* * *

><p>Grover POV<p>

I ended up finding a sally port in the wall and backtracking along it. I crept through the passageway, only having to avoid guards twice. It was going rather well until I hid behind a pillar. A hand tapped me on the shoulder and I turned around, the last thing I remembered seeing was a fist flying towards my face.

When I came to, I was chained to a wall, with a few people standing in front of me with an empty bucket. "Well, well, so sleeping beauty finally wakes!" crowedâ€| Was that a ghost? He looked see through, but was holding a book and was bent over, laughing. He had greased black hair and had a lot of gold jewelry around his neck, mostly in the shape of Egyptian hieroglyphics. He finally straightened up, and looked at me. "How did you get in bub? Ya see, I don't like it when people sneak around and trespass."

I didn't answer. "You do realize that you will be hanged right? That is, unless you tell us how you got in and why." Still nothing. He snorted in disgust. "Fine. Have it your way. You have a hanging scheduled for three in the afternoon. Don't forget now. Hate for you to be late for your execution." He and the others turned and left. I slumped down thinking hard. Only my friends could help me now.

* * *

><p>I was finally brought to the surface after being imprisoned for almost a day. I took my first look around as my eyes adjusted to the sunlight and my heart sank. A gallows had been set up about a hundred yards down the road. I was forced to walk towards my own hanging. Grover looked around, hoping to see a friendly face, but saw none. All the faces staring back at him were cold, stern looks, though a couple looked forced. No help would be forthcoming from them. It was then Grover resigned himself to his fate. As I stepped onto the platform, a little dwarf stepped forward and measured me up to my neck. She then went over to where several constructs made of wood

were situated. I then came to the ghastly realization that they were measuring me for my coffin, how long I would be without my head. The priest stepped forward and started to say a prayer from his bible. He then leaned close to me and whispered. "Gotta look out for our own eh?"<p>

I looked up and he gave me a slow wink. It was Percy. My heart leaped into my throat as I realized that there was still hope. I had faith in both Percy and my friends. I carefully glanced around but did not see anyone else I recognized. Then I had to stop as the guard forced me to kneel and placed my head in the chopping block, old, worn, and bloodstained from past executions. As the hooded executioner placed his axe at my neck, as if measuring the distance, he too leaned forward and muttered "Like my axe? I got it as a present from the Tsarina of Tokyo."

I smiled to myself. That would be Carter. It was actually quite similar to the first thing he had said at our original meeting. As the "holy king" stood up from his box he motioned for silence.

"What you see here before you, is a revolutionary. He broke into my private quarters and tried to bring down the kingdom. I cannot allow this. Though it pains me-" Here he placed his hand over his heart. "I will do what I must to protect us all. Headsman! Ready" He raised his hand and Carter raised his axe. The hand fell. So did the axe. But not at my head. It fell in the direction of the nearest guard, killing him. The "priest" opened his bible and pulled out an old pistol, he quickly shot the other two guards before shooting a third shot into the air. In the resulting confusion, Percy dropped his disguise and raced forward, pulling out a knife and cutting my bonds. A large stable door was flung open and a ornate carriage with four snow-white horses pulling it stormed up the hanging platform. Zoe was steering while standing up, and she called to us. "Hurry! I think we have overstayed our welcome." We quickly tried to jump on the top of the carriage, and it went fine with Percy jumping down next to Zoe and Carter and I leaping for the roof. It went great until the ceiling collapsed under our weight, spilling us into the inside. Zoe snapped the reins as we clattered off and the king arose in a rage. "That's mine! Guards, stop them!" Only a few were in the area however and only two were able to head us off. They stood in front of the rumbling contraption and dived out of the way at the last moment. Zoe steered us out onto the dirt road before giving the horses their head. The soldiers quickly formed a pursuit party and sallied out after us, starting to close the distance. Carter shifted himself to get more comfortable and the tip of the seat moved. We exchanged a glance and set it to the side. Underneath was a small chest full of gold coin, and some food and wines. Carter looked at me. "Is he a man of Gods or Gold?" I shrugged, not having an answer.

Percy POV

Carter popped his upper body threw the hole in the roof and leaned forward, a dusty bottle in his right hand. "Anyone care for some champagne?"

I sighed. "Carter, we are in the middle of a chase."

He thought for a moment before sighing and nodding his head. "Your right. What was I thinking? We need something more along the lines of red wine. Please forgive my mistake."

He disappeared back inside as Zoe and I shared an incredulous glance. He came back a moment later. "Ah! Here we go. Screaming Eagle Cabernet Sauvignon 1992. Most expensive red wine in the world. Would you like some? Not you, your too young." He added as an aside at me.

Zoe shrugged. "Why not? I have always wanted to taste this. Here, take the reigns." She said, tossing the steering instrument to me as she removed the cork with her teeth and drank straight from the bottle. "Yum. Exquisite. Turn left now!" She barked as we came up on a fork in the road. I sawed the reigns in the direction she wanted, causing us to swerve crazily for a moment. She glanced behind us. "I think we should gain some distance on them. There is a powder deposit not to far ahead. Once we are there, we can cut the horse loose, set the carriage on fire, and roll it at them. Exploding gunpowder = great distraction. Hey Grover!" At this a horned head came through the hole in the roof, and turned towards her.

"Yes?"

"Dump all the gold back there into the street next time we pass a good amount of people."

He nodded, and got ready. Soon we were passing through a quaint little hamlet when he dumped it. It instantly caused a blockage behind us, as poor people scrambled for the coins, punching, biting, and scratching to get to the money. This slowed down the pursuit greatly, as they had to pick their way through carefully. Once we reached the other side Percy pulled the horses to a halt. "Zoe, Carter!" He barked. "Cut the horses loose but do not let them go. Grover, keep a lookout on the soldiers." As we scrambled to do what he said, he opened his pistol and poured a small quantity of black powder into the carriage. He then grabbed a few of the more alcoholic beverages and spritzed them around the interior. Once everyone was done, he turned to us.

"Ready?" Once we nodded, he turned his handgun sideways and pulled the trigger. The sparks from the pan hit the powder and ignited. Once the fire was roaring inside, he found a good grip. "Everyone, grab on and push!" we all put our backs into it and slowly, ever so slowly, started to roll the buggy down the verdant green hillside. The juggernaut soon picked up speed, and hurtled towards the guards, who had just broken free of the throng. Some of the quicker minded got out of the way, others failed to move until the flaming hunk crashed into a wagon full of powder barrels. The first one blew up, and that was all it took. Soon there was a chain reaction and barrels were flying everywhere and detonating. As a huge cloud of smoke filled the area, we straddled the horses and took off in the opposite direction.

(Insert line break)

As the new reached the king, he became livid. "You are telling me the spy's got away? After infiltrating my castle, stealing my carriage, and killing my guards? How did you fail to catch them?" Upon hearing the explanation, he growled in anger. "You imbeciles are completely incapable. I'll do it myself." He strode across the plush carpeted room towards a large cage on one wall. He wrote a message and attached a copy to every birds leg. "Thanks to our feathered friends,

there will be no where they can hide. Every bandit, mercenary and bounty hunter will be searching for them." He cackled evilly as he released the messengers of woe.

Zoe POV

As the companions rode on, Carter tried to strike up a conversation with Percy. "How did you meet Zoe Percy?" The subject of his question shifted awkwardly. "Well, it's a funny story reallyâ€¦" he said with a nervous chuckle. Zoe cut in.

"I found him in the kitchen of CHB that was where I first noticed him. He showed an intriguing potential for stealth. I watched as he took an entire tray of pies off the windowsill. The cook came in three times and never saw him."

"Wait a minuteâ€¦" Grover asked. "Something doesn't add up. You said you first noticed him that time. So were you already there?"

"Does it matter?" Zoe asked.

Grover shrugged. "Not really, I suppose. I just wondered why you'd gone to the kitchen and why you took the trouble to remain unseen. Were you hiding from the cook yourself? And Percy just turned up by coincidence?"

"And why would I be hiding from the cook in his own kitchen?" Zoe challenged again. Grover shrugged innocently.

"Well, there was a tray of freshly made pies airing on the windowsill, wasn't there? And you're quite fond of pies, aren't you, Zoe?"

>Zoe drew herself up very straight in the saddle.<p>

"Are you accusing me of sneaking into that kitchen to steal the pies for myself? Is that it?"

>Her voice and body language simply reeked of injured dignity.<p>

"Of course not, Zoe!" Grover hurried to assure her, and Zoe's stiff-shouldered form relaxed a little.

>"I just thought I'd give you the opportunity to confess," Grover added. This time, Carter couldn't conceal his sudden explosion of laughter. Zoe gave them both a withering glance.<p>

"You know, Grover," she said at length, "you used to be a most agreeable young satyr. Whatever happened to you?"

>Grover turned a wide grin on her. "I've spent too much time around you, I suppose," he said.
And Zoe had to admit that was probably true."

The four were crossing the road in the middle of a village when they saw a group of people exiting a forest. "Hunting Party." Carter stated unnecessarily.

Both Zoe and Percy exchanged a glance, then laid a withering look on him. "You think? Maybe they found him injured and brought him back to repair the poor thing."

As they talked, they didn't notice the hunting party dropping the

deer and drawing bows until the first arrow flew by with a wicked hiss. "Whatâ€|" Carter asked. Percy cursed.

"Bounty hunters. Saw an opportunity to make quick money by capturing/killing us. Time to go." And with that he galloped away, and the others followed him.

After the companions had gone several miles at a fast clip, they decided to rest for the night. There was a short debate about where to rest, as the path made a very long loop around a place on the map. Grover was the one to ask. "Why does the path go that way? We could save a good chunk of time by cutting across this loop."

"According to what I heard, that is a place where the barrows are, nobody is sure who is buried in the barrows but people believe they were built by an ancient race, people of old, from eons ago." Carter responded. "We will not be able to make it all the way across before night fall. Yes, we can cut out a long part of the journeyâ€|" If you don't mind sleeping with ancient dead people nearby."

"But that's just a legend right?" Grover asked.

Percy shook his head grimly. "That's what they say. I think it is worth it. The faster we finish our journey the faster we get out of this dreamscape and back our regular time." The rest of us concurred. And so the decision was made. We slowly left the path and trotted into the gloomy looking plains and hills. After an hour or so, it started to get too dark to continue, so Zoe and Percy set up camp while Carter and Grover kept a lookout.

Carter took first watch as the rest of us slept. After the others had gone, it was my turn, the last watch before the dawn. As tired as I was I tried to do a good job. Any smart attackers would wait until just before morning to lull the victims into a false sense of security. I tried to concentrate, but the thick mist was disorienting and distracting. I tried hard to stay awake, but it was a losing battle. I slumped to the side, vainly trying to stay alert. Zoe had no idea how long she had been snoozing, when she stiffened and woke up. Something was wrong. Something was behind her, someone massive. Zoe rolled over and shot to her feet, hunting knives extended in the direction of the threat. Nothing was there. Yet she still felt a malevolent gaze resting upon her. She slowly turned. And then she saw it. In a heart stopping moment of absolute terror, a giant figure loomed out of the mist, towering above the mere, seeming to rise from the ground itself. It happened as quickly as that. One moment there was nothing. Then, in the blink of an eye, the figure was there, fully formed. Huge and menacing, black against the mist, a shadow of a giant warrior in ancient, spiked armor, with a massive winged helmet on its head. It must have been twenty meters tall, she thought as she stood, rooted to the spot in horror. The helmet was a full face design, but where the eye holes pierced it, there was only empty space. The figure seemed to shiver slightly and for one ghastly moment she thought it was moving towards her. Then she realized it was the movement of the mist curtain around the figure. Zoe's heart hammered inside her ribs, and her mouth was dry with fear. This was no mortal figure, she knew. This was something from the other side, from the dark world of sorcery and spells. Instinctively, she knew none of her weapons could harm it. The figure toward, unmoving except for the ebb and flow of the mist. The empty eyeholes seemed to seek her out. Then she heard the voice.

It was deep and seemed to echo around the open space around her, as if she was in a vast cavern and not an empty plain with a few hills. "_BEWARE MORTAL_" It boomed. "_DO NOT AWAKEN THE SHADE OF THE NIGHT WARRIOR BY RESTING HERE ANY LONGER. LEAVE THIS PLACE WHILE YOU ARE STILL ABLE!"_

Percy stumbled to his feet at the sound, rubbing his eyes.
"Whaaâ€|?"

Across the lake, the mist seemed to thicken and the terrifying figure seemed to grow more and more substantial, as if it was drawing power from the mist. This time, when it spoke, its voice was even louder than before. "_GO NOW WHILE I GRANT YOU THE CHANCE! LEAVE!"_

The final word seemed to reverberate forever, waking up the other two and forcing Zoe to involuntarily stumble back, away from the mist and the hellish warrior. She stumbled on a tree root, looked down to recover herself, and then, as she looked up, the Night Warrior was gone. Just like that. In an instant, like a candle extinguished. She glanced fearfully around, wondering if the warrior might appear somewhere closer. Then the voice came again. It was low this time, nowhere the volume of the original, and this time there were no words. Just a deep menacing chuckle. Her last reserves of courage deserted her. She raced back to the campsite and started saddling her horse. The other three needed no encouragement. Percy may have been the only other one to see the apparition, but they had heard the voice and the laugh and wanted to leave. As they finished packing and galloped away, in the darkness the ancient, invisible presence that inhabited the hill slipped silently back into its resting place, satisfied that another group of interlopers had moved on.

A/N Whew, this was a **_longggg_**** chapter. Consider it my apology for that short 400 word chapter from the other day. I tried to mix a bit of banter and humor into this one. Don't worry, Carter won't be around much longer. I wanted to try to bring Sadie into the story as well, the combined sass between her and Percy would be great. But alas and alack, I simply cannot figure out a way to bring her in. Oh well. Anyway, remember to review. Every review I see makes my heart jump in joy that someone else took the time to say something about the tale. Remember, REVIEWS = MORAL ENCOURGMENT AND SUPPORT WHICH = FAST UPDATES. See Ya later!**

~Zero

End
file.